

A Mediated Moderation study to explain the negative relationship between Job Insecurity and Employee Supportive Voice

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**Abstract**

*This study examines a mediated moderation model to explain the association between job insecurity and employee supportive voice, having affective commitment and emotional exhaustion as mediators, and employability with a buffering role. The sample was composed of 244 employees from distinct organizations. SPSS tool, Process, was used to analyse the data. As predicted, findings showed a significant indirect effect of job insecurity on employees' supportive voice through affective commitment. On contrary, the association was not supported through emotional exhaustion. No direct relationship between job insecurity and employee supportive voice was observed. Also no mitigating effect from employability was observed on job insecurity. This research contributes to the study of job insecurity and the emotions it arises in the employees towards the organization, by showing two possible perspectives. This paper evidences that supervisors may promote the adequate environment in the organization, to promote positive emotions on the employees and, consequently, effectiveness at the workplace.*

*Keywords:* employee supportive voice, job insecurity, employability, emotional exhaustion, affective commitment

### **Author Note**

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During recent decades, working life has dramatically changed regarding the working environment and career structures. These changes added to the dynamic customer markets and the intensification of demands for flexibility made the organizations adapt their current strategies, in order to be competitive in the market and survive (Sverke, Hellgren & Näswall, 2006). “Outsourcings, privatizations, mergers and acquisitions, often in combination with personnel reductions through layoff, offers of early retirements, and increased utilization of subcontracted workers” (Sverke et al., 2006, p.3) are some examples of the new strategies adopted. These organizational transformations may arise feelings of uncertainty on the staff, which leads to job insecurity emotions at the workplace. In addition, the recent worldwide financial crisis amplified the frequency and severity of changes operated in the organizations. This idea appears to be supported by the Skills and Employment survey, which was responded by 3000 current employees in the United Kingdom, during 2012. They stated that the major change at the workplace occurred between 2006 and 2012, which are specifically the years that correspond to the financial crisis. Indeed, the current working environment seems to be a prolific field to arise feelings of uncertainty and, consequently, job insecurity emotions on the employees.

Job insecurity refers to the situation in which employees are concerned about the future continuity of their working position (Cheng & Chan, 2008; De Witte, 1999; Sverke, Hellgren & Näswall, 2000). According to previous research job insecurity is considered a negative event, since research studies evidenced that when employees feel insecure about the future of their job, the quantity of health-related problems and negative job behaviours tend to increase (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2000). Scholars also suggest that the stressor effect of job insecurity may influence the employees’ emotions through two different perspectives. On one hand, it affects the workers’ health (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989) and, on the other hand, job insecurity may have an impact on the social exchange relationships (Tian, Zhang, & Zou, 2014). In addition, even with a lower level of agreement, scholars suggest an association between job insecurity and extra-role performance (the execution of activities, such as supportive voice, that

are not contractually established and promote the organizational functioning). King's (2000) study supported a significant negative relationship between job insecurity and extra-role performance, while Schreurs, Van Emmerik, Günter and Germeys (2012) discovered that job insecurity did not influence the performance of extra-role activities. There are conflicting conclusions on this field, which may suggest that job insecurity influences differently individuals at the workplace. Thus, it should be investigated by means of an alternative research design, which may include potential mediators and/or moderators, in order to better understand this association.

The literature presents a relevant gap in the identification of possible variables to mediate or moderate the association between job insecurity and employee voice. This breach may have both theoretical and practical relevance. Firstly, the theory would benefit from building on the current approaches to study job insecurity, which would expand the field. Secondly, by identifying variables that may explain the different responses from the employees to the stressor, organizations would be able to introduce practices that may promote workers' health and well-being (see Gilbreath, 2008). The conversion of the negative emotions into positive feelings, on the employees, may lead to higher levels of organizational effectiveness.

The present study aims to contribute to the literature in three different ways. First, I examine job insecurity consequences from two distinct perspectives, namely social exchange relationships, through affective commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991), and health, through emotional exhaustion (Bosman, Rothmann & Buiterdach, 2005). By introducing these two mediators to examine the association between job insecurity and employee supportive voice, I contribute to the literature that analyses the alternative consequences of job insecurity on employees' emotions. It also enables the organizations to understand how uncertainty affects the employees and ways to revert the negative feelings. Second, I examine a moderator of the relationship. The analysis of employability, which is considered to be a buffer of the negative effects of job insecurity (Silla et al., 2009), contributes to the growing literature identifying and testing boundary conditions of job insecurity. Organizations can benefit by comprehending how to

mitigate the negative impact of uncertainty on the employees. Finally, I examine the negative association between job insecurity and employee supportive voice using a mediated moderation design. To date, no other research study tried to explain the association with mediators and moderators in the same model. Thus, I consider it relevant to introduce in the same research study several job insecurity related variables, with different functions, in order to understand better the mechanisms behind the relationship.

## **2.0 Theoretical Development**

### A possible indirect relationship between job insecurity and employee supportive voice

#### **2.1 Job Insecurity**

Job insecurity has been considered as a major stressor that turns the employees' feeling of security into a sensation of insecurity that influences not only their own health, but also their actions and attitudes towards the organization (Sverke *et al.*, 2000). Job insecurity results from the employees' assessment of their own situation at the workplace. Workers estimate the severity of the threat they are facing, as well as their capacity to overcome this event (Folkman, 1984; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). Due to the subjectivity of this calculation, the value of insecurity can vary among co-workers (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Heaney, Israel & House, 1994; Sverke *et al.* 2000). Stress, loss of control and powerlessness are common negative outcomes of job insecurity.

For the majority of the individuals, employment is a crucial part for the fulfilment of economical and social needs, which is consistent with Jahoda's latent deprivation model (1982). When the stressor effect of unemployment threatens the stability and structure based on income, social interactions created outside the family and individual development, then, the future intentions and expectations of the employee are jeopardized (Schreurs, Van Emmerik, Notelaers & De Witte, 2010). Uncertainty promotes a sensation of powerlessness and loss of control (Schreurs *et al.* 2012) on the individuals, as well as decreases the perceived ability to predict the implications of options or decisions, which does not allow the individuals to prepare for the upcoming events (Folkman, 1984; Milliken, 1987). On one hand, the employees do not know how to achieve security again and, on the other hand, they are not sure if they should start looking for another job, which ruins the desired continuity of the current job (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995). Due to the nature of uncertainty arisen in the employees' feelings by job insecurity, behaviour to limit the damage is commonly adopted at the workplace (Hartley *et al.* 1991; Joelson & Wahlquist, 1987; Van Vuuren & Klandermans, 1990). This type of attitude towards the organization leads the employees to engage less in extra-role performance.

There are other relevant motives that influence employees' behaviour under uncertainty. Firstly, Hockey's (1993) control model of demand management argues that, under emotions of anxiety and stress, employees adopt performance-protection strategies. This behaviour leads to subsequent forms of indirect degradation in the long term, such as high levels of fatigue, selectivity of tasks and possible breakdown (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Secondly, conservation of resources theory developed by Hobfoll (1989) considers that individuals who feel that their personal resources are threatened by a stressor, quickly act by re-evaluating the value of those resources in order to minimize the actual loss. Considering a situation of job insecurity, employees may appraise work with a lower level of importance, which directly guides them to be less effective in terms of performance (Bakker, Van Emmerik & Van Riet, 2008), namely voice expression. Finally, Rousseau's (1989, 1995) psychological contract theory contends the formal and informal agreement between employer and employee, which includes the entitlements and duties from both parties. In fact, job security is one of the basis of this psychological contract, as it is provided by the employer in exchange for the employee's loyalty. Under a situation of job insecurity one of the psychological contract principals is broken, which heavily influences the job behaviour (Conway & Briner, 2005). Employee's recognition towards the organization is reduced, leading to a re-evaluation of the original contract. Individuals find a new equilibrium for the psychological contract by intentionally reducing the contribution level (Schreurs *et al.*, 2012) and by decreasing work commitment, namely higher turnover intentions and more withdrawal attitudes.

For the reasons above referred, job insecurity creates an erosion of the psychological and physical resources of the employees, leading to lower levels of effort, participation (Schreurs *et al.*, 2012) and loyalty, as well as more turnover intention (King, 2000).

## **2.2 Employee Supportive Voice**

Employee supportive voice is defined as “the voluntary expression of support for worthwhile work-related policies, programs, objectives, procedures, and so on, or speaking out in defence of these same things when they are being unfairly criticized” (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014, p.91). It can be characterized by the expression of support for relevant practices at the workplace or by preserving adequate organizational policies that co-workers criticize. (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). In fact, supportive voice is commonly associated with a challenge of a colleague’s opinion or suggestion to change the current practices. For example, an employee is able to speak up to introduce incremental suggestions that protect (or do not change) the policies at the workplace as a response to others that promote the alteration of the ideas currently implemented. In addition, that individual can also express his/her opinion during the meetings for the implementation of a planned change, in order to support it (Burris, 2012). Thus, whereas this variable presents little risk to the employee-supervisor relationship, this behaviour can be harmful when it comes to the interaction among co-workers. All in all, this variable exhibits a positive nature and aspires to conserve the supervisors’ status quo in the organization.

Supportive voice exhibits a stabilizing nature, which is manifested mostly as a response to challenges of the status quo and, therefore, this variable is more reactive than proactive (Grant & Ashford, 2008). This support can be provided during decision-making processes or through the defence of the current policies in the corporation, when the status quo is threatened (Burris, 2012). Thus, managers may exhibit more receptivity to the employees’ suggestions, when they are expressed in a supportive form. Indeed, supervisors consider it easier to accept ideas from individuals who are continuously part of the decision-making processes and aim to introduce incremental suggestions that are coherent with the supervisors’ strategy (Burris, 2012). This assumes a special relevance when the recommendations are expressed in an unpretentious and indirect way (Ambady et al., 2002; Norton, 1978). Thus, supportive voice is naturally connected to the support of the status quo in the organization, and presents consistency with the main concepts regarding pro-social behaviours (Organ et al., 2006). Employees tend to engage on this

type of voice more easily, because they do not have to consider the risk of challenging the supervisor.

### **2.3 Reduced employee Supportive Voice during Insecurity**

According to the Social exchange theory (SET), the relational contracts and the social agreements are based on loyalty, trust and commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). These values are the main pillars for the creation of reciprocate relationships at the workplace. Employees tend to enrol in extra-role performances (Gouldner, 1960; Organ, 1988), namely voice, when they feel their reliable supervisors are legitimately treating them. On the other hand, employees reduce their loyalty, trust and adequate treatment towards the supervisors in case workers perceive their superiors to be treating them in an unfair way (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994), for example by arising feelings on insecurity at the workplace. Employees consider uncertainty as unfair and a break in the psychological contract. Thus, I foresee uncertainty to reduce the employees' intentions to express supportive voice.

When individuals feel insecure, they might consider reducing the importance of performing adequately at work. This type of behaviour is consistent with the social exchange theory (Cropanzano, & Mitchell, 2005). However, workers do not want to increase their likelihood of job loss, which forces them to firstly decrease the level of performance in non-easily observable tasks that hardly lead to punishment (King, 2000). An example is a reduction in extra-role performance, such as employee supportive voice. In situations of insecurity, the employees feel powerless and, therefore, that sentiment might lead them to consider voice behaviour as effortless. This attitude represents the disconnection with the organization, which might be driven by feelings of personal fear or resignation (Van Dyne, Ang & Botero, 2003).

Considering the insecure context they are facing, employees may analyse their situation as stressful enough to unnecessarily increase the level of risk by challenging the status quo. On the other hand, under an uncertain context employees might feel that speaking up would not change anything, nor make any difference. It makes them engage in a passive endorsement of the supervisors' status quo (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Job-insecure employees are likely to feel

demotivated towards the organization, which leads them to consider the expression of voice as pointless in order to defend the organizational practices or to suggest changes. In conclusion, job-insecure employees suffer from significant levels of both mental and physical exhaustion, which leads them to decrease their participation and commitment in extra-role performance, such as employee supportive voice. All of these suggest that:

**Hypothesis 1: Job insecurity will be negatively associated with employee supportive voice.**

### **3.0 The Mediated Moderation Design**

#### **3.1 The presence of Mediating Variables**

Some scholars researched the influence of job insecurity in employees' personality factors, psychological traits and leadership techniques, in order to understand which workers are more adaptable to uncertainty and organizational change (Cheng & Chan, 2008). Previous research studies have demonstrated that feelings of insecurity at work are linked to relevant outcomes such as performance, health, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Cheng & Chan, 2008; De Witte, 1999, 2005; Sverke et al., 2000). Job security is considered an intrinsic part of the relationship established between employer and employee, which is aligned with studies on psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1990, 1995). In particular, employees are likely to stop engaging in extra-role performance, such as supportive voice, which can be harmful for the organizational effectiveness. This intention to give up on extra-role performance is a cognitive reaction to the source of stress, job loss. The rational response to workers concerned about their job security is to protect themselves by quitting on tasks that are neither easily to observe nor to punish, by their supervisors (King, 2000). This is proved by several studies that point out job insecurity as being negatively associated with extra-role performance (King, 2000). The employees' expression of voice is known as a driver of organizational effectiveness and good decision-making (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Burris, 2012; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). If employees do not engage on voice behaviour, their attitude can exhibit detrimental consequences for the organization, such as missing valuable business opportunities or relevant changes on organizational practices. In conclusion, I suggest that job-insecure employees are likely to decrease their performance in extra-role activities.

#### **3.2 Affective Commitment: Social Exchange Theory (SET)**

Social exchange theory (SET) is characterized as the reciprocate exchange, between two or more people, of tangibles or intangibles with more or less benefit to the individuals (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964). SET declares that individuals feel forced to reciprocate when someone provides them

with benefits, which is observable in the relationship established between employer and employee. In that specific case, when corporations give important values to their employees, such as economic stability and career growth opportunities, the workers have the desire to give something in return. Thus, employees engage in proactive work behaviour (Crawshaw, Dick, & Boradbeck, 2012; Weng et al. 2010), and consequently voice (Morrison, 2011), as a way of helping the organization. The relationships at the workplace are built on rules of exchange that grow over time, until the achievement of values such as trust, loyalty and commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Among the three dimensions of organizational commitment, affective commitment, or “the identification with, the involvement in, and the emotional attachment to, the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1996, p. 253), seems to be the most relevant one regarding exchange relationships at the workplace.

### **3.2.1 Affective Commitment as a mediator**

When employees establish an agreement with the employer, there are sets of rights and obligations each one of the parties has to follow, which can be observed by means of a contract. In addition, there is also a psychological contract that establishes an exchange of economical stability and justice at the workplace for loyalty, trust and commitment towards the organization (Haggard, 2012). During times of organizational uncertainty, employees perceive job insecurity as a breach on the psychological contract, which leads to negative emotions. Indeed, the stressor that resulted from the perceived powerlessness makes the employees feel anxious and uncertain about their future, which leads them to negatively assess the workplace environment (Tian, Zhang & Zou, 2014). As a result of the negative emotions and appraisal of the organizational ambience, the affective attachment might be reduced (Ashford et al., 1989). Furthermore, job insecure individuals also sense other emotions, such as irritation, fear and depression, which are feelings that decrease the inherent desire to be part of the organization (Kinnunen et al. 2000; Adkins et al. 2001; Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke et al. 2002). As the employees establish an emotional connection with the company based on positive emotions towards the workplace, when workers

start feeling a decrease on the emotional attachment, they would also reduce their affective commitment towards the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Indeed, this reduction in the emotional connection to the corporation might be supported by the increased motivation to engage in job searching. Previous research suggest that job insecurity is negatively associated with affective commitment, because the stressor has a threatening effect on the core interests of the employees, which leads them to reduce the affective connection to the organization (Tian, Zhang & Zou, 2014).

When employees notice that the employer is not able to retain their job position, they would consider the company as responsible for the job insecurity situation (Rudolph et al., 2004), which leads to harmful consequences for the employees' social identity and well-being, (Tian, Zhang & Zou, 2014). Previous research studies have revealed that lower levels of organizational commitment lead to negative behaviour at the workplace, namely intention to quit, work withdrawal and turnover (Cotton and Tuttle, 1986; Farkas and Tetrick, 1989; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Mobley et al., 1978). Thus, the individuals that used to behave accordingly to values, such as loyalty, trust and used to engage in behaviours that promote the organizational benefit, stop adopting this kind of attitudes at the workplace. In conclusion, job insecurity decreases affective commitment, which then decreases employees' supportive voice. Hence, this study expects the following:

**Hypothesis 2a: Affective commitment mediates the negative relationship between job insecurity and employee supportive voice.**

### **3.3 Emotional Exhaustion: Stress Appraisal Theory (SAT)**

Stress appraisal can be characterized as the perceived feeling of stress an individual has while facing an event (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The assessment of stressful situations is influenced by some personality traits (Kasler et al., 2009). Indeed, individuals do not perceive every event the same way and, therefore, the levels of stress diverge. According to Lazarus and Folkman

(1984), the stress appraisal is more related to the situational importance of the individual's well-being, than to the actual situation. Such assessment can consider job insecurity as a threat (stressful negative implication). In that case, the stressor is perceived as a threat, because the individual does not have enough resources to deal with it and, considers the event to be dangerous (Blasovich & Mendes, 2000). For example, under job insecurity at the workplace the employees are unsure about the future of their jobs and do not have enough sense of control over the situation to find a resolution, which leads them to be afraid.

### **3.3.1 Emotional Exhaustion as a mediator**

When organizational uncertainty arises at the workplace, employees start feeling insecure about the future of their job, the levels of power and sense of control are drastically reduced (Barling & Kelloway, 1996). Thus, individuals perceive this situation as a threat, because they do not know how to deal with the stressor. Previous studies often associate burnout with stress research (e.g. Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000; Kop, Euwema & Schaufeli, 1999; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Burnout, which includes emotional exhaustion as one of its constructs, is a multidimensional response to stress that considers a deeper perspective than simple exhaustion, and is considered as the final step in a progression of unsuccessful attempts to cope with a variety of negative stress conditions (Rothmann, Jackson & Kruger, 2003). Maslach et al (2001, p.399) define this variable as a "psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job". According to the same authors, emotional exhaustion, which is the most obvious symptom of burnout, is the dimension related to the basic individual stress aspect, which refers to emotions of being overextended and depleted of one's emotional and physical resources. Previous research exhibited a positive association between job insecurity and emotional exhaustion, as the stressor arises feelings of burnout on the employees (eg. Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995; Landsbergis, 1988). Indeed, job insecure individuals tend to be emotionally drained at the workplace, due to the negative effects of the threat, job loss.

When employees feel threatened at the workplace, they tend to engage in self-protective attitudes, namely no voice expression (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Van Dyne et al., 2003). In fact, the negative effects of a stressor like job insecurity, force the individuals to adopt a defensive attitude at work. They feel mentally fatigued and, therefore, do not enrol in extra-role performance, in order to conserve energy and avoid becoming emotionally drained (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Siegall & McDonald, 2004). Calling attention to the sources of their emotional exhaustion brings several risks, like the hostile reactions from the co-workers (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Consequently, the potential benefits of engaging in prohibitive voice are relatively low (just alleviates lower levels of emotional exhaustion) in comparison to the high costs this behaviour has (time, energy, retribution, heightened strain). As employees speak up when the expected benefits are more valuable than the costs (Detert & Burris, 2007; Milliken et al. 2003), it does not worth the risk to express voice over initial increases in emotional exhaustion. Thus, employees would prefer to conserve the energy instead of risk consuming it. In conclusion, job insecurity increase emotional exhaustion, which then decreases employees' supportive voice. Hence, this study expects the following:

**Hypothesis 2b: Emotional exhaustion mediates the negative relationship between job insecurity and employee supportive voice.**

### **3.4 The moderating effect of Employability**

Previous research studies presented evidence that individuals deal with insecurity and uncertainty in a different way, which arises the existence of potential moderating variables to buffer the negative impact of the stressor (see Schreurs et al., 2012; Sverke et al., 2000). According to Sverke and Hellgren (2002), there are factors that may moderate the relationship between job insecurity and its outcomes, such as supportive voice, affective commitment or emotional exhaustion. A potential moderator for this association is employability (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2008; De Cuyper et al., 2008; Silla et al., 2009), as the level of this variable will affect the employees' reactions towards negative events, like job insecurity. Recently, the study of this

variable has attracted more attention due to the renewed change in the labour market (McQuaid et al., 2005) and, several scholars studied the effect of employability in the organizational behaviour context (Baruch, 2001; Fugate et al., 2004; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Hall, 2004; Kanter, 1993). In fact, this variable has been considered as a crucial factor to deal with the mutable nature of labour, which is characterized by an increased necessity for flexibility and individualized responsibility (Allvin, 2004; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Castells, 2000).

Employability, “the individual’s perception of his or her possibilities to achieve a new job” (Berntson et al., 2006, p.225), is seen as a major provider of the employees’ sense of control over change (Barling & Kelloway, 1996). This variable has been suggested to alter workers’ reaction towards situational factors (Baruch, 2001; Fugate et al., 2004; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Hall, 2004; Kanter, 1993), which is proved by the possibility of leaving a bad situation of insecurity at work, for a more positive one, by finding a new job. Following this reasoning, it is possible to understand how a moderator like employability would exhibit an impact in the relationship between job insecurity and affective commitment or emotional exhaustion. Currently, employees look for opportunities that promote self-development and progression of skills and knowledge (Baruch, 2001; Kluytmans and Ott, 1999), due to the conversion of long-term stable employments into short-term flexible and unpredictable workplaces (Hiltrop, 1995). Kluytmans and Ott (1999) consider employability to be related to the likelihood and capacity of an employee to adapt when facing a situation of change at the workplace, and to the amount of knowledge and skills they possess that might be used outside the corporation. Thus, when workers experience instability in the corporation that leads to a possible job threat, they would react in a different way, according to their perceived employability. Indeed, the negative effects arose by job insecurity are expected to be mitigated by factors that increase employees’ sense of control regarding change (Barling & Kelloway, 1996). As control has been defined as “an individual’s beliefs, at a given point in time, in his or her ability to effect a change, in a desired direction, on the environment” (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986, p.165), perceived employability is a variable

intimately connected with it. Thus, the probability of workers feeling more connected to the organization increases, when they actually observe their relevance in the corporation and the associated benefits of their behaviour.

#### **3.4.1 Potential moderator between Job Insecurity and Affective Commitment**

According to Fugate et al. (2004), highly employable individuals are more adaptable to changeable working conditions. These employees are able to revert a negative situation by recognizing opportunities inside and outside the organization, and by adapting their attitudes and reactions (Kalyal et al. 2010). Indeed, the possibility of having another job available, during organizational uncertainty, leads to increased sense of control over the situation and, consequently, positive emotions for the employees (Berntson, Näswall, & Sverke, 2010) Hence, job-insecure workers will be more affectively commitment towards the organization if they have high levels of employability. In addition, the negative impact of job insecurity on affective commitment will be more pronounced if the employees have a lower number of jobs available, when compared to higher employability. Thus, in line with Silla et al. (2008), it can be argued that employability works as a moderator in the relationship between job insecurity and affective commitment, by buffering the negative effect of the stressor and by promoting the positive reactions during organizational uncertainty. This study hypothesizes the following:

**Hypothesis 3a: Employability moderates the relationship between job insecurity and affective commitment such that when workers report higher employability, the negative association between job insecurity and affective commitment is lower when compared to individuals with low employability.**

#### **3.4.2 Potential moderator between Job Insecurity and Emotional Exhaustion**

Personal resources “are aspects of the self that reflect a sense of resiliency and an ability to manipulate the environment” (Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis, & Jackson, 2003). According to De

Cuyper et al. (2012), individuals who have personal resources are less likely to lose them, as they present ability to protect established resources. Employability is considered a crucial personal resource in the current working context. This variable constitutes the workers' likelihood to retain their current job and, under the assumption that employability is an actual resource, the conservation of resources theory points out that individuals with higher levels of employability are less vulnerable to burnout (emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment, and depersonalization) (De Cuyper et al. 2012). Thus, this study argues that employability would moderate the association between job insecurity and emotional exhaustion, by mitigating the positive effect of the stressor on the employees' burnout attitudes. This study hypothesizes the following:

**Hypothesis 3b: Employability moderates the relationship between job insecurity and emotional exhaustion such that when workers report higher employability, the negative association between job insecurity and emotional exhaustion is lower when compared to individuals with low employability.**

Assuming employability moderates the relationship between job insecurity and affective commitment (H3a), and emotional exhaustion (H3b), it is also likely that job insecurity should affect employees' supportive voice through an increase in affective commitment and emotional exhaustion, conditional on employability. Therefore, this study expects the following:

**Hypothesis 4a: The indirect effect of job insecurity to employees' supportive voice, through affective commitment will be weaker when employability is high.**

**Hypothesis 4b: The indirect effect of job insecurity to employees' supportive voice, through emotional exhaustion will be weaker when employability is high.**

## 4.0 Methodology

This research uses data collected from a sample of 326 current employees. The sample was divided into two distinct groups: the *organization sub-sample*, which emerged from collaboration with a multinational company, and the *heterogeneous sub-sample* composed of workers from my personal network. Participants from the first group were reached via e-mail for internal communication, and the respondents from the *heterogeneous* group were approached via e-mail and LinkedIn. In addition, 82 non-genuinely answered questionnaires were excluded, because they were residually or not answered, which resulted in a final sample of 244 surveys (101 from the *organization* group and 143 from the *heterogeneous* one).

The multinational company belongs to the management technologies sector, having circa 300 workers. I established contact with the Human Resources department, and after explaining my study, the director granted me access in order to apply the research to all the organizational community. Due to schedule issues, only 220 employees were selected to receive an e-mail with a standardized invitation to be part of the respondents of the questionnaire, which can be found in Appendix two. On the other hand, my network resulted from my previous professional experiences in internships and university group works that required connections in the business world. Furthermore, I kept several contacts from my friends and former school colleagues that already started working. E-mail and LinkedIn seemed to be the most effective ways of contacting them, due to the quickness and accessibility those platforms have. Firstly, LinkedIn is the most popular professional social network platform, which enables the users to create a profile with all the professional experiences and social background. The majority of the companies also have a profile in this platform, which creates a closest relationship within the job market, between employers and employees. In fact, LinkedIn increases exponentially the possibilities of finding a job, which is the main reason why a huge percentage of employees are currently using this social network. Secondly, personal e-mail accounts are checked in a daily basis by their owners, which

make this communication method really efficient and one of the best ways to connect people. An example of the standardized invitation used can be seen on Appendix three.

The response rate (RR) is one of the major concerns, when considering the validity of the research study. For that reason, and knowing how crucial is to achieve a high percentage of answers, I decided to add an incentive to the study. According to Rose, Sidle and Griffith (2007), monetary rewards promote higher response rates, which made me include in the invitation letter a donation of 0.15€ to the Syrian appeal of the International Red Cross. The appendix four confirms the donation details. Moreover, the anonymity and confidentiality of the data providers was guaranteed, as well as the author's contact details.

Regarding the *organization sub-sample*, the survey was sent to a group of 220 individuals, from which 125 started answering the questionnaire (56.8%) and 101 fully completed it (45.9%). The home page of the study can be seen in Appendix five. The respondents' average age was 35.7 (SD = 7.92). 97 participants from this group were full-time workers, which represent 96% of this sample. Also, 85 had permanent contracts (84.2%). Personnel performing a management position (CEO, Director, Senior/Middle/Junior Manager, Supervisor and Team Leader) were responsible for 25.7% of the group, and non-management staff represented 74.3%. The participants that were educated to high school were 1% of the group, to college (or similar) level 24.8%, 61.4% had a BSc or equivalent and 12.9% had a MSc or equivalent. Finally, the percentage of male respondents was 51.5%.

On the other hand, the survey was sent to 278 individuals of the *heterogeneous* group, from which 256 started answering the questionnaire (92.1%) and 143 fully completed it (51.4%). The respondents' average age was 28.9 (SD = 10.35). 111 participants from this group were full-time workers, which represent 77.6% of this sample. Also, 71 had permanent contracts (49.7%). Personnel performing a management position (CEO, Director, Senior/Middle/Junior Manager, Supervisor and Team Leader) were responsible for 41.5% of the group, and non-management staff represented 58.5%. The participants that were educated to high school were 4.9% of the

group, to college (or similar) level 18.2%, 48.3% had a BSc or equivalent and 26.6% had a MSc or equivalent. Finally, the percentage of male respondents was 70.4%. In both cases, the response rate was above 40%, which is considered acceptable to publications such as the *Academy of Management Journal* or the *Journal of Applied Psychology* (Baruch, 1999).

Finally, age, gender, and academic qualifications can be related to individuals' capacity to adapt to stress, and also to feelings of affective commitment (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In order to explore the possible contextual main effects of sample (the *organization sub-sample* or the *heterogeneous sub-sample*), I performed an analysis of variance (ANOVA) with job insecurity, emotional exhaustion, affective commitment, and voice as dependent variables. I found significant effects of sub-sample only on emotional exhaustion ( $F(1, 240) = 12.12, p < .001$ ), which can be observed on Appendix six. Therefore, to control for possible confounding effects of context, subsamples were coded into dummy variables (See Table one).

#### **4.1 Measures**

Job insecurity was assessed using four items built by Vander Elst, De Witte and De Cuyper (2013). The survey presented the participants with a list of statements in order to reflect their self-perception of job insecurity. They were asked to indicate their extent of agreement to each one of the sentences, using a five-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Items included "Chances are I will soon lose my job" and "I feel insecure about the future of my work". In addition, a reverse coded item was included. It resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86.

Employee supportive voice was measured using a three-item scale developed by Burris (2012). Participants were asked to use a five-point scale from "almost never" to "almost always", in order to characterize each one of the statements. Sample items included "I keep well-informed about issues where my opinion might be useful" and "I get involved in issues that affect the quality of work-life here". The Cronbach's alpha was 0.84.

Employability was measured on an eleven-item scale built by Rothwell and Arnold (2007). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with each statement, using a

five-point scale between “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree”. Items included “Even if there was downsizing in this organization I am confident that I would be retained” or “My personal networks in this organization help me in my career”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.83.

Affective commitment was measured using a six-item scale from Meyer and Allen (1990). Participants in the survey were asked to rate their agreement with each statement on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Sample items included “I feel strong sense of belonging to my organization” or “I would be happy to work at my organization until I retire”. The Cronbach alpha was 0.87.

Five items from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) assessed emotional exhaustion. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with each statement in a five-point scale, from “never” to “always”. Sample items included “I feel emotionally drained from my work” or “I feel used up at the end of the workday”. Reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) was 0.86.

#### **4.2 Data Analysis**

Table two presents means, standard deviations and Pearson correlation coefficients of the researched variables. First, the results showed a negative correlation between job insecurity and employee supportive voice, which confirmed the initial expectations. Job insecurity was also negatively correlated with affective commitment and employability. In addition, it was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion. Second, affective commitment exhibited a positive correlation with employability and employee supportive voice. On the contrary, it was negatively correlated with emotional exhaustion. Third, emotional exhaustion was negatively correlated with employability and employee supportive voice. Four, employability exhibited a positive correlation with employee supportive voice. Regarding the control variables, gender was positively correlated with age. It was also negatively correlated with employability and employee supportive voice. Age showed a positive correlation with affective commitment and employee supportive voice. Furthermore, it was negative correlated with job insecurity. Finally, the respondents’ qualifications were negatively correlated with emotional exhaustion.

<b>Table Two: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations among Variables</b>											
	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Sample	0.59	.49	1								
2. Qualifications	3.94	.79	.08	1							
3. Gender	1.37	.49	-.19**	.06	1						
4. Age	31.67	10	-.33**	-.10	.14*	1					
5. Job Insecurity	2.33	.83	.02	.01	-.02	-.21**	1				
6. Affective Commitment	3.68	.76	.04	.06	.00	.24**	-.39**	1			
7. Emotional Exhaustion	2.55	.83	-.22**	-.131*	-.03	-.01	.33**	-.44**	1		
8. Employability	3.55	.50	.10	-.02	-.22**	-.11	-.42**	.39**	-.32**	1	
9. Supportive Voice	3.34	.87	-.05	.06	-.15*	.15*	-.18**	.39**	-.07	.32**	1

Note. Commit. Cust = Affective commitment to customer.

(1) Dummy variable coded 0 if Sample = Company; and 1 if Sample= heterogeneous; (2) Ordinal variable coded 1 if Qualification = "No formal school", 2 if Qualification = "High School", 3 if Qualification = "College or similar", 4 if Qualification = "University (BSc or similar)", 5 if Qualification = "University (MSc or similar)", and 6 if Qualification = "University (PhD)"; (3) Dummy Variable coded 1 if Male and 2 for Female; (4) Age in years.

\*  $\rho < .05$ ; \*\*  $\rho < .01$

In order to test the hypotheses, I used a regression-based path analysis using PROCESS software, which is a computational tool for estimating and probing interactions and the conditional indirect effects of moderated mediation models (Hayes, 2012; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). Process is a SPSS software macro that allows the test of the indirect effects, with a normal theory approach (e.g., the Sobel test) and with a bootstrap approach to calculate Confidence Intervals (CI). According to MacKinnon, Lockwood, and Williams (2004) bootstrapping is recommended. Through the application of bootstrapped CIs, it is possible to avoid power problems introduced by asymmetric and other non-normal sampling distributions of an indirect effect. Hypotheses were tested in two interlinked steps with two different models, which can be observed on Appendix seven. First, I examined a Model 4, which allows up to ten mediators operating in parallel without affecting each other, in PROCESS using 10000 bootstrap samples, 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals for all indirect effects. Emotional exhaustion and affective commitment were introduced as mediators operating in parallel. This model also incorporates the multistep approach proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986). Second, I integrated the proposed moderator variable into the model and empirically tested the overall moderated mediation hypothesis. Accordingly, the procedures used to test the moderated mediation were integrated such that I considered the possibility of a statistically significant indirect effect being contingent on the value of the proposed moderator (employability). To test for these Hypotheses, I estimated Model 7, a mediated moderation model, in PROCESS, which accounts for a conditional indirect effect of job insecurity on voice through emotional exhaustion and affective commitment with 10000 bootstrap samples and 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals for all indirect effects. Following Aiken and West's (1991) recommendations, predictor variables were mean-centred, and the conditional indirect effect was analysed at different values of the moderator variable: the mean, one standard deviation above, and one standard deviation below the mean. Control variables were included in the analysis.

#### 4.2.1 Tested Mediation

Hypothesis 1 proposed that job insecurity is negatively associated with employee supportive voice (H1). Table three shows that job insecurity was not negatively associated with employee supportive voice ( $\beta = -.05; t = -.75; p = .46$ ), thereby non supporting H1.

Hypothesis 2a proposed that affective commitment mediated the negative association between job insecurity and employee supportive voice. Results showed that job insecurity was negatively associated with affective commitment ( $\beta = -.32; t = -5.67; p < .001$ ), and that affective commitment was positively associated with employee supportive voice ( $\beta = .48; t = 5.85; p < .001$ ). Furthermore, it was observable a significant indirect effect of job insecurity on employees' supportive voice through affective commitment (indirect effect =  $-.15$ ; 95%CI from  $-.25$  to  $-.08$ ). Thus, results supported hypothesis 2a.

Hypothesis 2b proposed that emotional exhaustion mediated the negative association between job insecurity and employee supportive voice. Results showed that job insecurity was positively associated with emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = .33; t = 5.4; p < .001$ ). However, emotional exhaustion was not associated with employee supportive voice ( $\beta = .13; t = 1.72; p = .09$ ). Thereby, results did not support hypothesis 2b.

#### 4.2.2 Test of Mediated Moderation

Table four presents the results for the interactions between the cross-product term *job insecurity x employability* and each one of the mediators, affective commitment and emotional exhaustion. Results did not indicate statistical significance for affective commitment nor for emotional exhaustion ( $B = .14, t = 1.53, p = .13$ , and  $B = -.11, t = -1.07, p = .29$ , respectively). Thereby, non-supporting Hypothesis 3a nor Hypothesis 3b.

In addition, table four also shows the outcome for the conditional indirect effects of job insecurity on supportive voice, through affective commitment and emotional exhaustion, having employability as a moderator. Results indicated non-significant conditional indirect effects through affective commitment ( $B = -.08, \text{Boot LLCI} = -.15, \text{Boot ULCI} = -.02$ ) and through emotional exhaustion ( $B = .03, \text{Boot LLCI} = -.01, \text{Boot ULCI} = .08$ ). Thereby, non-supporting 4a nor 4b.

<b>Table Three: Regression results for simple mediation</b>				
Steps	B	SE	t	p
Direct and Total Effects R2 = .21 p<.001	-10			
Affective commitment regressed on job insecurity (a1 path)	-.32	.06	-5.67	<.001
Emotional exhaustion regressed on job insecurity (a2 path)	.33	.06	5.40	<.001
Voice regressed on affective commitment, controlling for emotional exhaustion and job insecurity (b1 path)	.48	.08	5.85	<.001
Voice regressed on emotional exhaustion, controlling for affective commitment and job insecurity (b2 path)	.13	.07	1.72	.09
Voice regressed on job insecurity, controlling for affective commitment and emotional exhaustion (c' path)	-.05	.07	-.75	.46
Partial effects of control variables on affective commitment				
Sample	-.12	.12	-1.02	.31
Qualification	.07	.07	1.08	.280
Gender	-.31	.11	-2.82	<0.01
Age	.01	.01	0.63	.530
Unstandardized value	Effect	SE	LL95%CI	UL95%CI
Bootstrap results for indirect effect	-.11	.04	-.2	-.03
Effect through affective commitment	-.15	.04	-.25	-.08
Effect through emotional exhaustion	.04	.03	-.01	.10

Note. N=115. Bootstrap sample size = 10,000. LL = Lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL = upper limit.

<b>Table Four: Regression results for mediated moderation (Conditional Indirect Effects)</b>				
Predictor Variable	B	SE	t	p
DV: Emotional exhaustion (Mediator) R2 = .24 p<.001				
Constant	3.72	.36	10.26	<.001
Job Insecurity	.22	.07	3.21	<.01
Employability	-.41	.11	-3.57	<.001
Job Insecurity X Employability	-.11	.10	-1.07	.290
DV: Affective commitment (Mediator) R2 = .30 p<.001				
Constant	2.56	.32	8.03	<.001
Job Insecurity	-.16	.06	-2.74	<.01
Employability	.55	.10	5.50	<.001
Job Insecurity X Employability	.14	.09	1.53	.130
DV: Voice (Dependent Variable) R2 = .21 p<.001				
Constant	1.37	.55	2.48	<.05
Job Insecurity	-.05	.07	-.75	.46
Emotional Exhaustion	.13	.07	1.72	.09
Affective commitment	.48	.08	5.85	<.001
Partial effects of control variables				
Sample	-.12	.12	-1.02	.31
Qualifications	.07	.07	1.08	.28
Gender	-.31	.11	-2.82	<0.01
Age	.01	.01	.63	.530
Savoring Strategies				
	Effects (1)	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	BootULCI
Conditional indirect effect at Employability = $M \pm 1SD$				
Mediator: Emotional Exhaustion				
- 1 SD (-0.50)	.03	.03	-.01	.10
M (0.00)	.03	.02	-.01	.08
+ 1 SD (+0.50)	.02	.02	-.01	.07
Mediator: Affective commitment				
- 1 SD (-0.50)	-.11	.04	-.20	-.05
M (0.00)	-.08	.03	-.15	-.02
+ 1 SD (+0.50)	-.04	.04	-.14	.04

Note. N=227. (1)- Unstandardized Boot Indirect. Bootstrap sample size = 10,000. LL = Lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL = upper limit. All predictor variables are mean-centred.

## **5.0 Discussion**

This study examines the negative association between job insecurity and employee supportive voice through a mediated moderation model, in which affective commitment and emotional exhaustion have a mediating role and employability buffers the negative effect of job insecurity. The theoretical development was based on literature related to job insecurity, social exchange and stress appraisal theories sources. Contrary to expectations, the results did not show a significant negative direct association between job insecurity and employee supportive voice, but the relation occurred according to the anticipated direction. These findings suggest that job insecure employees do not alter their voice behaviour at the workplace. A possible explanation considers that when employees feel their job positions are in risk, decreasing the level of voice behaviour might be observed and interpreted by the supervisors as a reduction in the commitment towards the organization. Employees feel afraid of causing a negative impression on the superiors that may result in dismissal, and, therefore, they maintain their effort engaging in voice behaviour. According to this approach, employees are moved by self-interest, namely the objective of creating a good impression on supervisors (Bolino, 1999). This idea is supported by various research studies that presented impression management as the motive to some extra-role performance (Finkelstein, 2006; Snell & Wong, 2007).

Another possible explanation considers that my sample was composed of employees that were intrinsically motivated in the performance of supportive voice behaviour. As this intrinsic motivation was not affected by the organizational uncertainty, employees may enjoy expressing supportive voice by their own choice and not as a result of a duty. In line with this potential explanation, Bakker et al. (2008) defend that individuals may engage in extra-role performance, because they enjoy considerably an activity in which they are completely embedded in.

Considering the second hypothesis, it was proposed that affective commitment and emotional exhaustion might mediate the association between job insecurity and employee supportive voice. The results confirmed the mediation effect for affective commitment, but not for emotional exhaustion. This may be explained by the stronger relation of job insecurity with work-

related processes, namely affective commitment (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke et al., 2002). Furthermore, health conditions are long-term related and not work-specific consequences of job insecurity (Sverke et al. 2000), which leads to smaller associations. Findings suggest that the effect of the stressor may influence the employees' emotions, by reducing their commitment towards the organization, which would influence the positive relationship with the expression of supportive voice. Thus, affective committed employees may engage less in voice behaviour when feelings of job insecurity at the workplace arise, when compared to affective committed individuals that are not experiencing job insecurity.

On the other hand, contrary to expectations, results suggest that emotionally exhausted employees do not change their effort to engage in supportive voice behaviour under job insecure environments. A potential explanation considers that when the employees feel their job position to be threatened, it is crucial to protect themselves from future job loss (Kang, Gold & Kim, 2012). Thus, they consider it valuable to maintain a positive relationship with the supervisors, as it may help them in the future by extending their network and by increasing their working opportunities in the same industry.

Contrary to the hypothesized, employability did not exhibit a significant moderating effect on the mediated moderation design to explain the relationship between job insecurity and employee supportive voice. Findings suggest that employability do not increase or decrease the negative effects of the stressor on the mediators (affective commitment and emotional exhaustion). A possible explanation is that the employees from my sample were intrinsically connected to the organization, as they do not increase their levels of perceived control/security as a result of having other jobs available. They want specifically to remain in the current workplace, because it is where they feel professionally satisfied the most and where they want to continue their careers (Wang et al. 2014). Indeed, highly affective committed individuals present lower willingness to find another job and, consequently, their feelings of insecurity will not be moderated by employability.

Another potential explanation is that the individuals from my sample already experienced uncertainty during previous jobs, which led them to stressful situations. Thus, they consider that finding a new job opportunity may not solve this problem, as the current business world is constantly surrounded by an uncertain environment. These workers do not feel the impact of other job opportunities on the stressor effect of job insecurity, because they expect to face a similar context in a future workplace and, therefore, employability would not change their current feelings.

### **5.1 Theoretical Implications**

Theoretically, the research study provides empirical evidence with several implications for research on job insecurity and employee supportive voice. The first implication is related to the contribution in a field of study that has been arising contrasting conclusions. It is not clear for researchers the exact effect of job insecurity on extra-role performance, as King (2000) defends a negative association, Feather and Rauter (2004) a positive relationship giving specific circumstances, and Schreurs et al, (2012) suggests no association between the variables. Thus, this paper provides evidence about one of the dimensions of extra-role performance, supportive voice, which advances that job insecurity effects differently the distinct aspects of extra-role performance.

A second contribution is the introduction of employability as a moderator to the negative effects of job insecurity. Previously, scholars analysed the moderating role of managerial practices, through transformational leadership, and workplace context, via supervisor support. Therefore, this study enlarges the scope of research regarding variables to moderate the relationship between job insecurity and employee supportive voice.

To my knowledge, this is the first research to introduce a mediated moderation model to explain the association. It not only observes the direct impact of job insecurity on employee supportive voice, but also the conditional indirect effects through affective commitment and emotional exhaustions (mediators), having employability as a buffer to the negative impact of job

insecurity. This model provides relevant evidence on two perspectives of how employees deal with insecurity at the workplace: (1) it addresses the negative feelings arose by a stressful situation and the impact it has in the employees' health (stress appraisal) and (2) the break of the psychological contract established between employer and worker that would damage the emotions of the individuals towards the organization (social exchange). In fact, this approach shows that job insecurity may firstly influence the employees' emotions, which consequently would affect their behaviour at work, namely on voice expression.

## **5.2 Practical Implications**

This research study, using a mediated moderation model to examine the relationship between job insecurity and employee supportive voice, presented several crucial practical contributions. Through this study, it was possible to observe the meaningful variance on the perceived effect of the constructs (job insecurity, affective commitment, emotional exhaustion, employability and supportive voice) on the individuals. This evidences the necessity of introducing human resource management (HRM) processes in order to regularly monitor the employees' feelings, because one-time attempt to control and reduce job insecurity or buffer its negative effects, is not likely to successfully solve the problem. In addition, a regular control of the employees' perceived emotions (e.g. via frequent online surveys) might enable managers to recognize increased levels of job insecurity in early stages, which eases a potential action from the organization, at the right moment (Hackman & Wageman, 2005). The introduction of the HRM practices has special importance when the organization is facing uncertainty.

When companies are under incertitude, they should consider crucial to inform the employees about the restructuring process, instead of maintaining them unsure about their future. Indeed, this might be a good way to dissipate emotions of job insecurity on the employees and transform change into an opportunity (1) to intensify the sense of control over the situation and (2) to reduce the severity inherent to job insecurity. The HRM might use the restructuring process to promote the personal improvement and growth of the employees, as well as the benefit of the

employees' input in the decision-making, which may be reflected on increased levels of perceived employability and, consequently, higher levels of security at the workplace (Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Schreurs, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2009).

The expression of voice is universally considered as beneficial for the effectiveness of the organization (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). Specially, during organizational uncertainty employees' expression of suggestions, ideas and concerns plays a decisive role for the progress (or survival) of the corporation. Organizations should learn how to positively influence the expression of supportive voice, using for that purpose this and other research studies that assess the mechanisms behind the promotion of this voice dimension. However, the employees' input tends to decrease when workers feel insecure about the future of their job. Consequently, organizations might analyse any moderator that mitigates the negative effect of job insecurity on supportive voice, or promote feelings in the employees that would mediate the relationship, as a way to soften the threat.

This paper confirmed the mediating effect of affective commitment on the association between job insecurity and employee supportive voice. Affectively committed individuals want to be part of the organization as they are strongly identified with the values and mission of the corporation. With this additional evidence to the literature, organizations might infer that affective committed individuals would benefit the organizational effectiveness, namely through supportive voice. Thus, employers might understand how to promote feelings of affective commitment within the staff and introduce organizational practices and policies to promote it. For example, the organization should respect the exchange contract established with the employee – do not make the worker feel insecure about the future of his/her job –, in order to maintain the relationship of trust, loyalty and commitment. Under these circumstances, the individual would be affectively connected to the organization, enrolling in attitudes that would benefit the workplace conditions.

### **5.3 Limitations and directions for future research**

This research study also presents some limitations that should be taken into account when analysing the results. Firstly, the model used in this study considered a restricted number of variables, which limited the number of perspectives to explain the relationship between job insecurity and employee supportive voice. Future researchers might consider a wider approach to this association, by analysing more theories and variables to moderate and mediate the negative effects of the stressor. Moderators may consider job security preferences or the individuals' experience of objective insecurity, via temporary versus permanent employment (e.g. Klandermans, Hesselink, & van Vuuren, 2010). Mediators may include relevant variables at the individuals' level (e.g. personality characteristics such as job embeddedness).

Secondly, this study used variables that represent perceptions of behaviours, instead of focusing on the actual employee behaviour. Although some scholars stated that "the terrain of silence is difficult and frustrating, but also eminently interesting and important" (Pinder & Harlos, 2001, p.363), I believe that reactive behaviours at the workplace also take into account such perspective. Future researchers could develop a study in which observes and measures the exact employee's behaviour.

The data collection resulted from collaboration with one company and from my personal network. This approach might arise sampling bias, because a company from the management technologies is not representative of all the companies and my network does not represent all the workers. Thus, the individuals from other organizations could have answered differently from the ones who answered. Future researchers might focus on establishing more partnerships with companies that belong to distinct industries, in order to create a wider and more representative sample. Furthermore, it also avoids the problem of non-response on online platforms, such as LinkedIn, and creates the possibility of comparing workers' responses at the same organization.

Fourthly, the scales used during the data collection were self-reported. Therefore, there is a possible limitation regarding the common method variance that may justify the results. Whereas variables like job insecurity or affective commitment can only be measured by asking respondents

directly, extra-role performance, namely employee supportive voice, could be assessed by a supervisor's evaluation. Nevertheless, I tried to reduce the level of common method bias by applying validated measures that are internationally accepted. I also decreased the risk by asking the respondents to voluntarily answer the survey and by pointing out the anonymous treatment of the research study. Future research might assess the variables using multiple sources, for example by evaluating employee voice behaviour using supervisors' and workers' assessment.

Finally, due to the cross-sectional research design applied in this study, causal associations among the variables cannot be inferred from the results. Indeed, when considering the negative effect of job insecurity on the employees' expression of voice, it cannot be used to achieve a definite conclusion, due to the research method used. Thus, future research might consider the use of a longitudinal research design for data collection, which would enable the extraction of a causation effect from the results. In addition, a longitudinal design would fill in the gap in the literature and find a conclusive direction for the relationship between job insecurity and employee supportive voice.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

This research study analyses a mediated moderation model to explain the association between job insecurity and employee supportive voice. Affective commitment and emotional exhaustion are used as mediators, and employability has a buffering role on the negative effects of job insecurity. My results did not confirm the negative relationship between job insecurity and employee supportive voice, nor the conditional indirect effects of job insecurity on employees' supportive voice through emotional exhaustion. On contrary, I was able to confirm the significant indirect effect of job insecurity on employees' supportive voice through affective commitment. Considering this, I can infer that corporations under a change context should maintain the employees well informed about the situation and make sure that the staff knows how important their ideas, thoughts and concerns are for the effectiveness of the organization. In addition, the company should understand how to promote feelings of affective commitment among the co-workers. Via the alteration of the current processes and practices, the organization can provide the staff with position involvement, autonomy, informational complexity and reciprocity, which are crucial nutriments that enable the individuals to be emotionally attached and loyal towards the organization.

## 7.0 References

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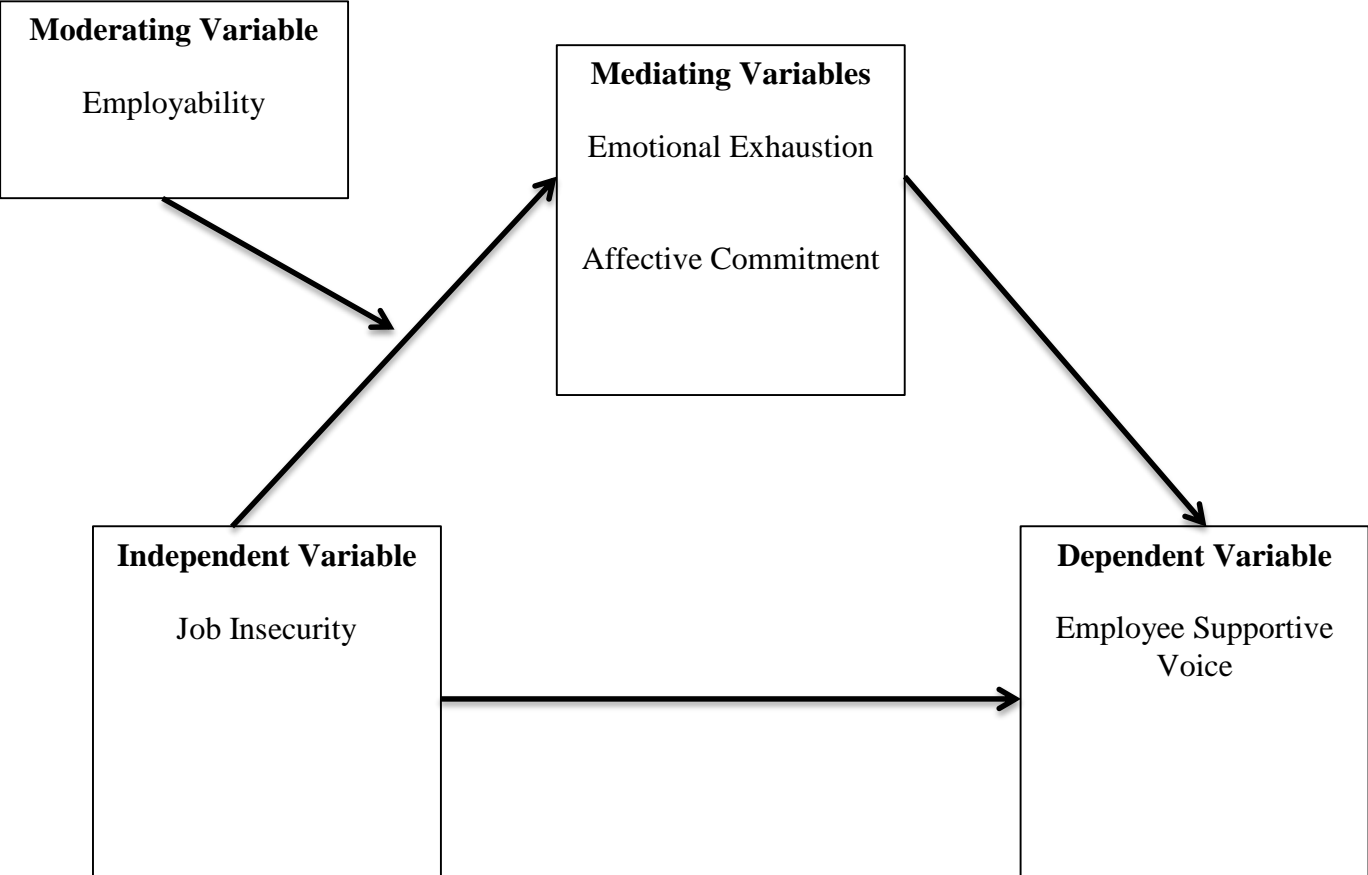
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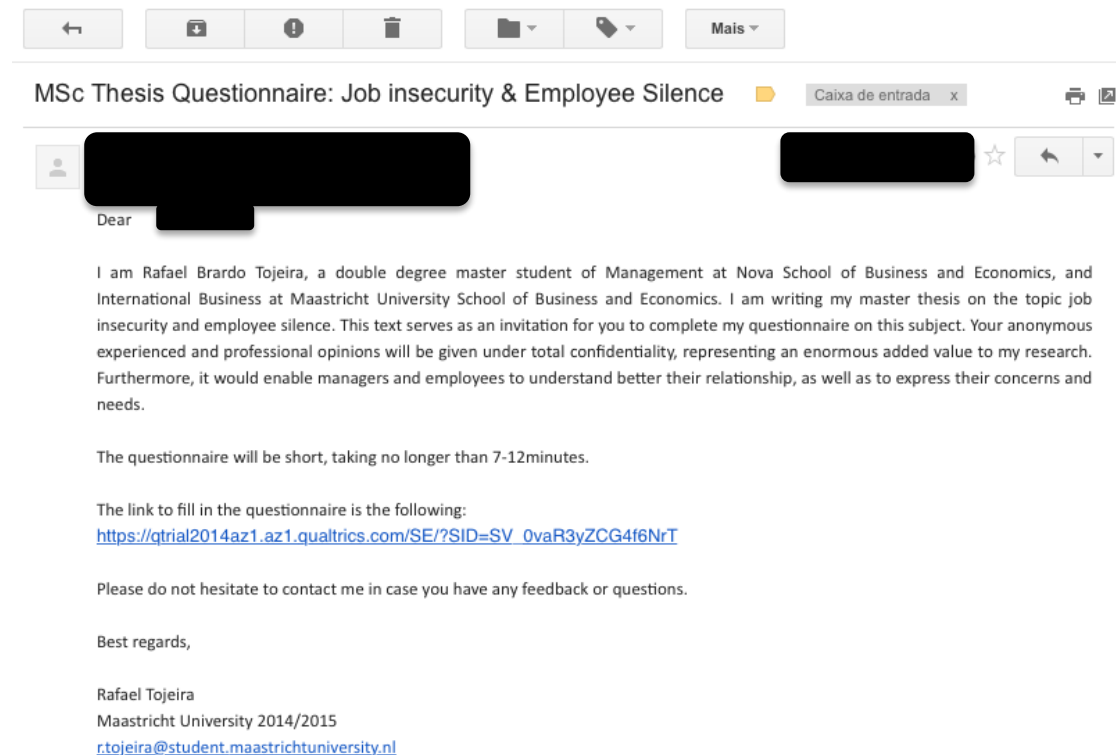
## 8.0 Appendix

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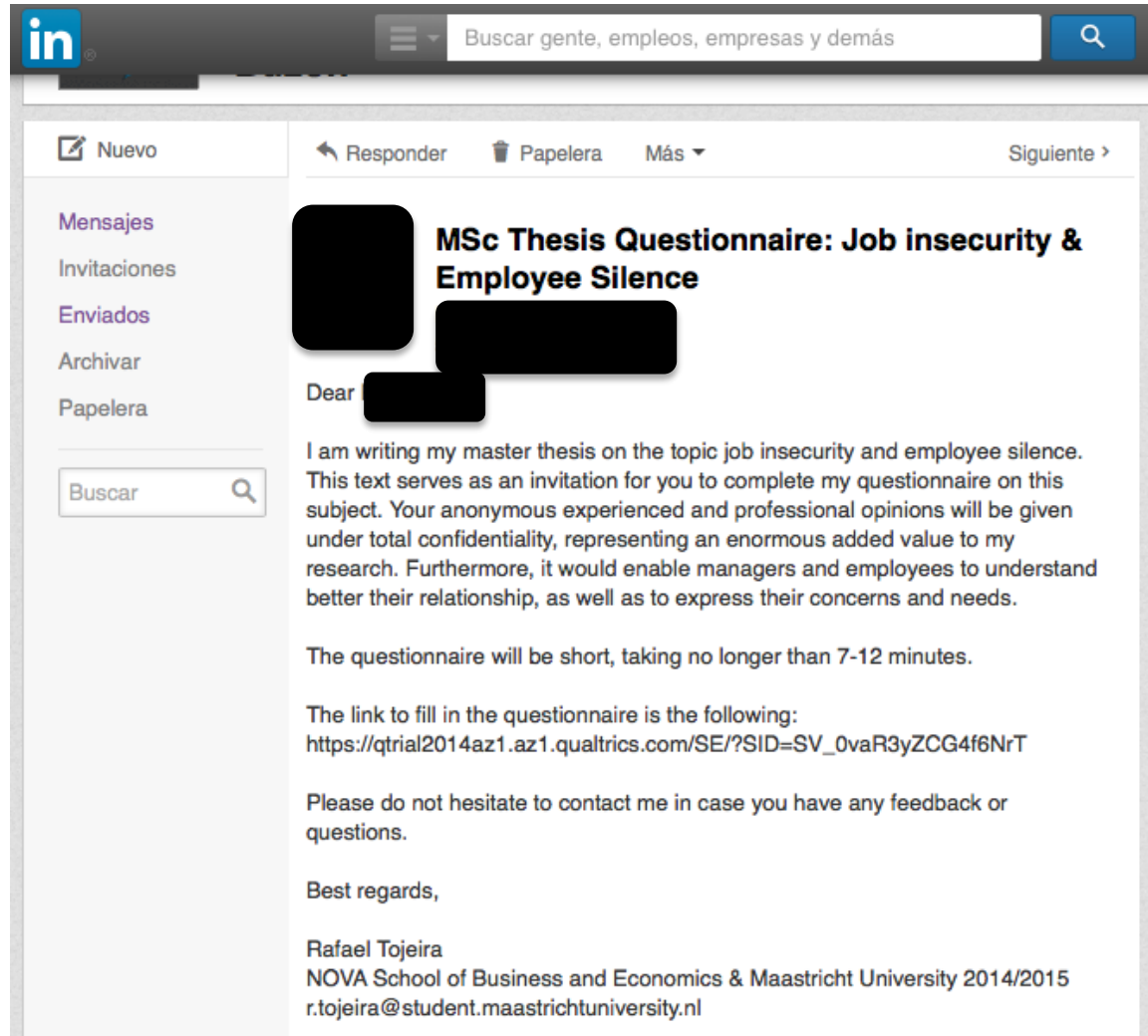
**Appendix One: Graphical Model**



## Appendix Two: E-mail standard Invitation to participate in the Research Study



## Appendix Three: LinkedIn standard Invitation to participate in the Research Study



The image shows a screenshot of a LinkedIn message interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Buscar gente, empleos, empresas y demás" and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, there are navigation options: "Nuevo", "Responder", "Papelera", "Más", and "Siguiente". On the left side, there is a sidebar with menu items: "Mensajes", "Invitaciones", "Enviados", "Archivar", and "Papelera". Below the sidebar is a search box with the text "Buscar" and a magnifying glass icon. The main content area displays a message from a contact whose name and profile picture are redacted with black boxes. The message title is "MSc Thesis Questionnaire: Job insecurity & Employee Silence". The message body contains the following text:

Dear [redacted]

I am writing my master thesis on the topic job insecurity and employee silence. This text serves as an invitation for you to complete my questionnaire on this subject. Your anonymous experienced and professional opinions will be given under total confidentiality, representing an enormous added value to my research. Furthermore, it would enable managers and employees to understand better their relationship, as well as to express their concerns and needs.

The questionnaire will be short, taking no longer than 7-12 minutes.

The link to fill in the questionnaire is the following:  
[https://qtrial2014az1.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_0vaR3yZCG4f6NrT](https://qtrial2014az1.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0vaR3yZCG4f6NrT)

Please do not hesitate to contact me in case you have any feedback or questions.

Best regards,

Rafael Tojeira  
NOVA School of Business and Economics & Maastricht University 2014/2015  
r.tojeira@student.maastrichtuniversity.nl

## Appendix Four: Receipt of the Donation

For each one of the genuinely answered questionnaires, 0.15€ was donated to the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) – Syrian appeal.

244 responses = 36.60€

  
**ICRC** Languages: English

Payment details > Address > Card info > **Confirmation**

**Your payment**  
Merchant: Comité Int. de la Croix Rouge  
Offer: Donation for the Syrian Appeal

✓ Confirmation of your payment  
The amount of 36.60€ was successfully verified.  
Thank you for your payment

Data/time	10/01/2015 16:32:44
Card number	xxxx xxxx xxxx 0387 06/2015
Processor	Master card SIX Payment Services E-link
Terminal ID	17734137
Contact Number	171321545
Authorization number	T00958
Transaction ID	RoBTbNVYc6gLwZ8phrM3IGDI5hkRx
Order ID number	32806


Please send a copy of the confirmation to the following e-mail address:

Click on **Close**, to complete the payment and return to the merchant website

This window automatically closes itself after 60 seconds

## Appendix Five: Homepage of the Questionnaire

**Maastricht University**English

Dear participant,

Thank you for your interest in this study!

Before we start, I would like to give you some information:

**Good cause**  
When filling in the questionnaire, you make a direct contribution to a good cause. For **each study** which is completely and genuinely filled in, we will donate **0,15€ to the International Committee of the Red Cross - Syria Appeal** (more info: <https://www.icrc.org/eng/donations>)

**Topic of interest:**  
With the study at hand, I want to get further insights into the topic of **job insecurity and employee silence**. By this, it is meant that, in specific situations, people do not express their opinion under an uncertain circumstance such as losing their job. Therefore, this text serves as an **invitation for you to complete my questionnaire** on this subject. Your input would represent an **enormous added value** to the research and would enable the **managers to understand better** their employees. Furthermore, it would also give the opportunity to the **employees to express their concerns** and alert supervisors to **their needs**.

**Anonymity:**  
Self-evidently, your **anonymity** will be guaranteed at any time. There is neither the possibility, nor the interest, to draw inferences about you as a person with the answers provided. It is very important for the study that you are **honest when answering the questions**. Furthermore, please notice that there are no right or wrong answers, as long as they are honest.

**Validation:**  
It might seem to you as if some questions are relatively equal to each other. This is not a mistake, but serves validation-purposes. Thus, I can make sure that I really measure what I want to know. I, therefore, ask you to **answer every single question**.

**Time needed:**  
Filling in the questionnaire takes approximately **7-12 minutes** of your time.

**Contact details:**  
If you have any questions or queries, please contact:

Rafael Tojeira  
Master Student of International Business  
Maastricht University, School of Business and Economics  
Department of Organization and Strategy  
[r.tojeira@student.maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:r.tojeira@student.maastrichtuniversity.nl)

Thank you for your participation!  
Rafael

>>

**Appendix Six: Independent Samples Test**

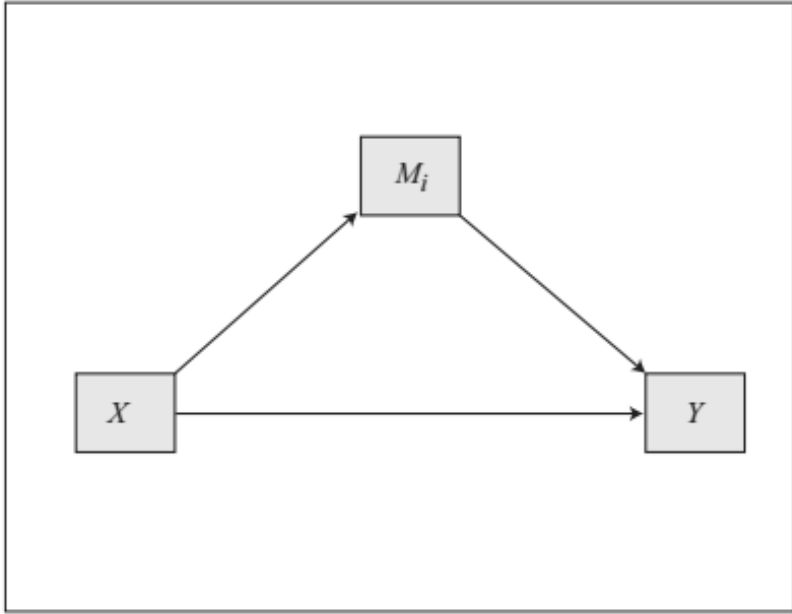
Table One: Independent sample test for the organization and heterogeneous samples								
		Lavene's test for Equality of Variances		t	df	Sig: (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	St Error
Emotional Exhaustion Average	Equal Variances Assumed	F	Sig.	3.481	240	.001	.36977	.16052
	Equal Variances not Assumed	9.168	.003	3.304	170.533	.001	.36977	.14886

☐

Appendix Seven: Model 4 and Model 7 from PROCESS (SPSS)

**Model 4**

Conceptual Diagram



**Model 7**

Conceptual Diagram

